



**Australian Government**

**NATIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR SALINITY AND WATER QUALITY (NAP)  
 NATURAL HERITAGE TRUST (NHT)  
 NATIONAL LANDCARE PROGRAMME (NLP)**

**QUARTERLY FINANCIAL REPORT – SUBMITTED TO SOUTH COAST NRM INC**

Period 1 April to 30 June 2007	
Project ID	053011a
Project Title	Securing a future for the Dibbler – implementation of the Dibbler Recovery Plan
Contact	Dr Tony Friend
Delivery Organisation	Department of Environment and Conservation
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**PART A**

**Summary of Funding**

ALL FIGURES ARE GST EXCLUSIVE

Total Funding Approved (GST Excl)	<b>A</b>	333375	
Funding paid to 31 Mar 2007	<b>B</b>	223650	
Funding paid 1 Apr to 30 Jun 2007	<b>C</b>	0	
Funding paid to date	<b>D</b>	223650	B+C
Funds yet to be distributed	<b>E</b>	109725	A-D

**TO BE COMPLETED BY PROPONENT**

**Acquittal of Funding**

Amount on hand as at 31 Mar 2007 (Pls refer to previous report)	<b>F</b>	42,847.55	
Amount received from South Coast NRM 1 Apr to 30 Jun 07	<b>G</b>	0	
Amount received from other sources 1 Apr to 30 Jun 2007	<b>H</b>	774.53	
Expenditure Amt for 1 Apr to 30 Jun 2007	<b>I</b>	42,651.42	
Funds on Hand as at 30 Jun 2007	<b>J</b>	970.66	<b>F+G+H-I</b>

Figure (H) to include interest accrued.

**Funds Required**

Estimated Expenditure 1 Jul to 30 Sep 2007	<b>K</b>	57000	
Estimated Funds from other sources 1 Jul to 30 Sep 2007	<b>L</b>	1100.00	
Funds on Hand as at 30 Jun 2007 (same as above)	<b>J</b>	970.66	
Net Funds Required	<b>M</b>	54863	<b>K-L-J</b>
Scheduled funding as per Payment Schedule (Quarter Commencing 1 Jul 2007)	<b>N</b>	54863	*

Figure (M) may be negative.

\* Please note that a variation must be applied for if Net Funds Required (M) is greater than the Scheduled payment (N) by more than 5%. If Funds Required is a negative or less than the Scheduled payment, then a formal variation is not required. Only invoice for the required amount (rounded to nearest thousand is acceptable). If the amount is very close the scheduled payment, you may invoice for the scheduled amount.

### Period 1 April to 30 June 2007

**Project summary** (copied by South Coast NRM Inc from the current Project Schedule)

**Project description:**

The dibbler (*Parantechinus apicalis*) is a small marsupial that has survived only in the Fitzgerald River National Park (FRNP) and on islands off Jurien Bay. This is a huge reduction from its historical range, which included the Moore River area, the Swan Coastal Plain, the Kojonup district and along the coast from Albany to Jerdacuttup.

The Dibbler Recovery Plan 2003-2012 lays out a plan of action to increase the security of the dibbler that includes protecting, monitoring and increasing knowledge about existing populations, as well as survey, captive breeding and reintroduction. Previous recovery actions, undertaken through collaboration between government, universities and community groups, have involved surveys for unknown populations, captive breeding and the subsequent establishment of two (2) new populations, on Escape Island and in Peniup reserve near Jerramungup. The first release in a reintroduction to the Stirling Range National Park (SRNP) was carried out in 2004. Population numbers in the FRNP have increased since the introduction of fox control by regular baiting.

The proposed project will extend this program and will result in improved coordination of the recovery work in the South Coast and the Northern Agricultural Regions of Western Australia. A project officer will be employed to work with agencies and local communities with a focus on increasing community ownership and participation in dibbler recovery.

**Key Investment Areas:**

- Provide comprehensive understanding of dibbler habitat requirements on the mainland.
- Result in the publication of an information sheet assisting managers to recognise potential dibbler habitat
- Substantially improve knowledge of remnant dibbler distribution in south and west coastal regions
- Substantially improve understanding of dibbler population dynamics in surviving and reintroduced populations
- Create another reintroduced dibbler population on the mainland.
- Strengthen involvement of local communities in dibbler recovery
- Significantly improve the conservation status of the dibbler

**Milestone for quarter ending 30 June 2007**

2006/07 fox control, fire management and dieback protection targets met. Surveys using hair traps carried out in four south coast conservation areas east of Hopetoun. Population monitoring carried out in FRNP, Peniup and SRNP (access permitting). Risk analysis workshop conducted.

**Milestone for next quarter ending 30 September 2007**

Population monitoring carried out in FRNP, Peniup and SRNP (access permitting).

**Subprogram Leader/South Coast NRM Inc Project Liaison Officer**

Deon Utber  
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**Section 1: Progress for the quarter**

**1a: Summary**

*Provide a brief summary of activity for the quarter in relation to the Project's deliverables - including the Project's Objectives, Outputs and Key Investment Areas as listed above. Provide up to 1/2 of a page. Do not use acronyms.*

The main achievements of this project under the key investment areas during this quarter relate to a) improving knowledge of remnant dibbler distribution in the south and west coastal regions, b) improving knowledge of the dibbler's population dynamics in surviving and reintroduced populations and c) the establishment of another dibbler population on the mainland.

The past year has been a very dry one and the dibbler's numbers have generally fallen in response, although this has resulted in low numbers in some populations but little decline in others. In particular there were fewer dibblers on two of the Jurien Bay islands (Escape and Boullanger) with less decline on Whitlock, the island with high nutrient input from seabirds. Declines on the mainland have been less marked, but detailed comparison with rainfall parameters has not yet been carried out.

New surveys to discover additional populations have been carried out this quarter. Surveys have been extended to the east of the Fitzgerald River National Park, into areas east of Ravensthorpe and Hopetoun where dibblers were recorded in the 1970s. No dibblers have been discovered. These surveys will continue until the end of the project. Spring is the optimum time for dibbler surveys, when the young dibblers are numerous and spreading out into surrounding habitat. If good rains fall this winter, population numbers should rise and dibbler populations will become more detectable during spring and summer.

Monitoring of reintroduced populations at Peniup has produced promising results. At Peniup the growing population fell

dramatically when wet soil conditions prevented regular fox baiting. Since the reserve dried out, baiting has been carried out assiduously and dippers have reappeared. Although winter capture rates are generally the lowest of the year, three dippers, including a new female, were captured in June. Based on results of trapping since spring last year, we expect the recovery to be evident this spring, when the highest numbers of both juveniles and adults are usually captured.

At the Stirling Range National Park dipper reintroduction site, wet soil conditions prevented trapping this quarter. Before the rain, however, a hair survey was carried out to search for dippers beyond the bounds of the trapping grid. This resulted in the detection of dippers outside the grid, although these hairs were found close to the grid where dippers had been trapped before. This survey will be continued throughout the management block in which the dipper release was carried out.

#### 1b: Milestone for quarter

*State if the milestone has been achieved or to what extent it has not been achieved. Also briefly describe the progress against the milestone and any outcomes.*

*2006/07 fox control, fire management and dieback protection targets met.*

These targets relate to the implementation of management procedures in the Fitzgerald River National Park, Peniup proposed Nature Reserve and the Stirling Range National Park to reduce fox numbers, prevent large wildfires and the spread of *Phytophthora* dieback.. These targets have all been met.

*Surveys using hair traps carried out in four south coast conservation areas east of Hopetoun.*

Hair traps were deployed in June 2007 at sites assessed as suitable habitat for dippers, on the following reserves: Jerdacuttup Lakes Nature Reserve, Reserves 9393 and 43060 and Laurina Road proposed Nature Reserve (UCL 1046).

*Population monitoring carried out in FRNP, Peniup and SRNP (access permitting).*

Wet soil conditions prevented access to the Stirling Range NP reintroduction site grid along East Pillenorup Track this quarter, but regular monitoring was carried out on trapping grids at Peniup (3 grids) and in the eastern Fitzgerald River NP (near Hamersley Drive-Moir Track intersection).

*Risk analysis workshop conducted.*

A risk analysis workshop to examine the possible removal of mice from Boullanger and Whitlock Islands, was proposed for this quarter, but has been postponed until the July-September 2007 quarter. One of the key people, who has just finished her Ph.D. on the interaction of mice, dippers and dunnarts on the islands, has just recovered from a protracted illness and was not available in May 2007, the time proposed for the workshop.

#### 1c: Outputs for period (1 Jan – 30 Jun 2007)

*State if the Outputs have been achieved or to what extent they have not been achieved. Also briefly describe the progress against the total Outputs.*

##### *Awareness raising*

Newsletter article for Malleefowl Preservation Group submitted for publication.

##### *Management of significant species or ecological communities*

Translocation programs developed; A new release of dippers is proposed to a west coast reserve. A translocation program for a release into Lesueur National Park has been developed and is awaiting sign-off by the District and Regional Managers.

##### *Management of significant species or ecological communities*

Number of individuals bred: Dippers are bred each year for release into the wild under this project. Dipper young are counted in the pouch at Perth Zoo during May, before being deposited in nests. Forty-eight dippers were recorded in pouches in May 2007. Given the usual rate of survival, this will provide sufficient animals for an October 2007 release.

##### *Significant pest plant, animal and disease control*

Fox control carried out over Peniup, Stirling Range NP and Fitzgerald River NP.

##### *Investigations (survey, inventory and mapping, and data analysis)*

Biophysical studies completed, area surveyed. Five areas east of the FRNP have been surveyed this quarter.

##### *Research and development studies*

This study is ongoing and relates to the study of population dynamics in dipper populations.

## **Section 2: Lessons learned to date**

*Briefly describe the lessons that have been learned to date - if not reported previously. (Up to 1/4 of a page).*

Knowledge of dibbler biology requires study over extended periods so that the impacts of climatic variation can be assessed.

### Section 3: Promotional opportunities and highlights

*Briefly describe any promotional opportunities and highlights - including good news stories.*

Please send any promotional documents (e.g. Media releases sent to the paper, Brochures etc.) as a separate file (MS Word or compressed PDF is preferred).

A news story about the results of monitoring dibblers on the Jurien Bay Islands was submitted for publication in the local newspaper at Jurien Bay. This story is attached and describes the findings of the monitoring trip in May 2007. Numbers of dibblers were relatively high for this time of year but on Boullanger Island only one male was captured, indicating that almost complete male die-off had occurred. This is the first time this has been recorded during this project although complete male die-off was recorded in the 1980s. It appears to correlate with rainfall and further investigation of this phenomenon is warranted, as it is an important feature of the dibbler's biology.

### Section 4: Impact on the community to date

*Briefly describe the impact that this project has had on the community to date – only include impacts that have not been reported previously under this section. (Up to 1/4 of a page).*

This project has had participation from the community in the south coast and Jurien Bay areas, principally through involvement in fieldwork and training in monitoring techniques. During the current quarter, three community members have been involved in dibbler monitoring, contributing 13 days work and over 120 hours towards the dibbler recovery program. This type of impact has been ongoing through the life of the project.

### Section 5: Unresolved project issues or risks that need mitigating

*Briefly list any unresolved project issues that require attention or risks that need mitigating (by either the Delivery Organisation, South Coast NRM Inc or other partners/stakeholders)*

None

### Section 6: Performance checklist (black or white reporting)

Deliverable/Service	YES / NO only	Action required if "NO"	Notes: (Notes are required only if the answer is "NO." Briefly explain reasons why and planned actions following discussions with Subprogram Leader/Project Liaison Officer to rectify situation)
Is the project on track for the successful completion of its objectives by the project end date - as per the contract?	YES	Discuss with Subprogram Leader/Project Liaison Officer	
Is the project on track for the successful delivery of its Key Investment Areas by the project end date - as per the contract?	YES	Discuss with Subprogram Leader/Project Liaison Officer	
Have all contracted Outputs been fully achieved to date - as per the contract's Output Table?	YES	Variation	
Have the Milestones for the quarter been fully achieved?	NO	Variation	Three of the four milestones for this quarter were fully achieved. No trapping was carried out at the Stirling Range NP, but this monitoring milestone is dependent on access being available. The fourth milestone, a risk analysis workshop to examine the possible removal of mice from Boullanger and Whitlock Islands, has been organised for July 2007. This is later than proposed, as one of the key people, who has just finished her Ph.D. on the interaction of mice, dibblers and dunnarts on the islands, has just recovered from a protracted illness and was not available in May 2007, the time proposed for the workshop.
Based on current knowledge, will the next quarter's Milestones be fully achieved?	YES	Discuss with Subprogram Leader/Project Liaison Officer	
Is financial expenditure on track (within or under budget) according to the contracted	YES	Discuss with Subprogram Leader/Project	

Budget?		<i>Liaison Officer</i>	
Are all planned M&E arrangements established?	YES	<i>Discuss with Subprogram Leader/Project Liaison Officer</i>	
<b>Section 7: Project Personnel</b>			
Please provide information on the personnel for which this project provides funding.			
How many FTE did this project originally intend to engage or employ?			<b>1.0</b>
For those currently employed staff or currently engaged consultants/contractors, please list full time equivalency (FTE), full name and contact details. Please list the key (primary) project contact in the first row.			
FTE	Full Name	Phone / Mobile	Email
N/A	<b>Tony Friend</b>	<b>0429449983</b>	<b>Tony.Friend@dec.wa.gov.au</b>
1.0	Timothy Ada Button		Tim.Button@dec.wa.gov.au
If applicable, please describe the arrangements to fill, and/or the timeframe for filling, any vacant positions or consultancies?			
<b>Section 8: Project locations</b>			
Provide the specific GPS coordinates of project sites for projects with less than 11 specific sites or the specific names of the subcatchment(s) or catchments for the locations of the project's main activities (if more than 10 sites).			
Projects that are basically funding support positions or facilitators and who work across an entire subregion (eg NRMOs) or the entire South Coast NRM Region (e.g. the Regional Biodiversity Facilitator) may state the name of the subregion or "Region wide".			
<b>NB: Quarterly Reports will not be accepted if this section is not correctly completed.</b>			
<b>Section 9: Is a variation to the current Project Schedule, Outputs Table or Budget required?</b>			<b>YES</b>
If the project has not fully achieved the Milestones or Outputs for the reporting period then a request to vary the Project Schedule or Outputs table <b>MUST</b> be submitted with this report. NB: Any reduction or change to these deliverables is likely to affect the Budget also (refer below).			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If the project wants to move funds between budget line items and the total of the budget line will increase by 5% or \$1000 or more (whichever is greater) then a request to vary the approved Budget <b>MUST</b> be submitted with this report.</li> <li>Any proposed change to planned expenditure on Capital costs (Assets and Equipment) must include a request to vary the Budget and an Asset purchase approval must be submitted if over \$5000. This <b>MUST</b> be submitted with this report.</li> <li>It is recommended that any forecasted variation to the contract be discussed with Subprogram Leader or Project Liaison Officer.</li> </ul>			
Please contact the South Coast Natural Resource Management Inc office to obtain a variation form and an electronic copy of your contract documents so that you can amend the documents (in track changes mode) to reflect this new information. Please prepare these required documents in consultation with South Coast NRM's Subprogram Leader or Project Liaison Officer.			
<b>IMPORTANT:</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is a contractual requirement to notify South Coast NRM's at the earliest opportunity if the project is not on track. This requirement is not necessarily tied to the quarterly reporting process; processing these variations in advance of the quarterly reporting period is preferred.</li> <li>Variations will NOT be considered unless adequate information is provided and the prescribed process is followed. We have had many instances in the past where inadequate information has been provided which significantly delay decisions.</li> <li>Failure to report factually on project performance, including the need for variations, will be deemed as a serious breach of contract conditions and appropriate action will be taken.</li> </ul>			
<b>Section 10: Have you purchased any approved assets with Funding during the last quarter?</b>			<b>NO</b>
If <b>YES</b> , please list here individual items that cost <u>\$500 or more</u> and the date the item was purchased. Do not list items under leasing arrangements.			
<b>Section 10: In your opinion, has any intellectual property been created that has the potential for exploitation and/or commercialisation, and for which the Intellectual Property Rights should be legally protected under Statutory and/or Common Law?</b>			
			<b>NO</b>
If <b>YES</b> , please describe here.			

**DECLARATION BY DELIVERY ORGANISATION**

In my opinion the amounts shown on this financial report were spent in accordance with the terms of the Contract Agreement.

Signature of Authorised  
Representative

Name

Position

Date

**IMPORTANT  
NOTE:**

**Please ensure that both an e-copy of your Final version is sent to [reports@southcoastnrm.com.au](mailto:reports@southcoastnrm.com.au) and a signed hard-copy of this report is submitted by mail or fax to the South Coast Natural Resource Management Inc Office  
444 Albany Hwy, ALBANY WA 6330  
Fax: 9841 2707 Attn: Reports  
(accompanied by a tax invoice if appropriate)  
by the due date stated in the covering letter**

## APPENDIX

### *Population monitoring*

#### Surviving populations

##### Fitzgerald River National Park

An all-weather trapping grid near the junction of Hamersley Drive and Moir Track in the eastern Fitzgerald River National Park (FRNP) is trapped each quarter to provide comparative data on dibbler population dynamics against which the progress of reintroduced populations can be measured. This quarter the regular trapping was carried out over four nights, from 16<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> April 2007, totalling 240 trapnights. Thirty-five dibblers were caught, including 23 recaptures (18 female, 5 male) and 12 new animals (6 female, 6 male). This is a relatively high number of animals to be captured at this time of year, and indicates a strong increase in the population since late April 2006, when only 9 dibblers caught. The previous year, in early May 2005, 23 dibblers were captured, indicating that the population levels were low in 2006.

A small population on the southern side of East Mount Barren has been monitored under this project since its discovery in 2005. Two dibblers were caught there in over the 16<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> April 2007 trapping period.

##### Boullanger and Whitlock Islands, Jurien Bay

The dibbler populations on Boullanger and Whitlock Islands were discovered in 1985 and are monitored twice a year, in May and October, under this project. This quarter the monitoring session was carried out on 28<sup>th</sup> May – 1<sup>st</sup> June 2007, with a total of 496 trapnights on Boullanger Island and 160 on Whitlock Island. On Boullanger Island, 23 dibblers were caught, including only one male, a new animal. Amongst the 22 females there were 18 recaptures and 4 new animals. By contrast, on Whitlock Island, 29 animals were captured, including 13 males (4 new) and 16 females (7 new). This indicates that an almost complete male die-off occurred in 2007, the first such event to be recorded during this project (this was also recorded in the late 1980s and late 1990s). The much higher density of animals on the smaller Whitlock Island is also obvious.

Numbers on the islands appear to be lower on Boullanger Island this year (and also on Escape Island, in January 2007) than in previous years. Numbers on Whitlock Island are usually fairly stable and this is consistent in this quarter's results.

#### Translocated populations

##### Stirling Range National Park (SRNP)

No trapping was carried out at SRNP this quarter due to wet soil conditions along the East Pillenorup Track preventing access. A hair survey using hair funnels to detect the presence of dibblers was commenced, placing lines of hair-funnels at 100m intervals running east and west from the trapping grid, to attempt to define the extent of dibbler population within the release area. Dibbler hair was recovered in funnels set at the western side of the trapping grid, but only 100 metres outside the grid, 200 metres from one of two sites where new dibblers were captured in February and March 2007.

Baiting around the dibbler release block was carried out at monthly intervals.

##### Peniup proposed Nature Reserve

The quarterly trapping to monitor dibblers at Peniup was carried out from 18<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2007. Three dibblers were caught here, including two recaptured males and one new female. Capture rates at Peniup in autumn and winter are usually low, and the population is recovering from a crash in 2005, so these numbers are encouraging. The trapping to be carried out in September will determine whether the population is continuing its recovery.

#### *Surveys for additional populations*

Surveys were carried out at sites east of Ravensthorpe and Hopetoun in June 2007, using hair-funnels to detect dibblers.

Hair traps were deployed in June 2007 at sites assessed as suitable habitat for dibblers, on the following reserves: Jerdacuttup Lakes Nature Reserve, Reserves 9393 and 43060 and Laurina Road proposed Nature Reserve (UCL 1046).

## DIBBLERS AT PENIUP – THE STORY CONTINUES

Article submitted to Malleefowl Matters, the newsletter of the Malleefowl Preservation Group

Tony Friend and Tim Button  
Department of Environment and Conservation, Science Division, Albany

The dibbler, a small carnivorous marsupial once found from Shark Bay to the Eyre Peninsula, was thought to be extinct since the early 1900s. Rediscovered in 1967 at Cheyne Beach by wildlife photographer Michael Morcombe, the species popped up for brief periods of time at a number of spots on the south coast from Torndirrup National Park in Albany, east to the Jerdacuttup area, over a period that spanned the 1970s and 1980s. Dibblers were also discovered on Boullanger and Whitlock Islands off Jurien Bay. The only sites where sustained captures still occur are the Fitzgerald River National Park and the Jurien Bay Islands.

As part of the Dibbler Recovery Program a breeding colony was established in 2000 at Perth Zoo from Fitzgerald River National Park stock. Peniup proposed nature reserve, south-east of Jerramungup, was selected by the Dibbler Recovery Team as the site of the first mainland reintroduction of the dibbler.

In the afternoon of 3 October 2001, 43 dibblers, mostly captive-bred, but including some of the original Fitzgerald River NP animals, were released in the middle of the Peniup reserve by local community members, DEC and Perth Zoo personnel. Over the following months the fate of the dibblers was monitored, both by trapping and radio-tracking, and showed that a small proportion of the dibblers survived, despite losses from both starvation and predation, mainly by birds, including grey currawongs. In the following spring, the establishment of the new colony was demonstrated when five young born at the reserve were captured, in October 2002. It was a modest start, but enough to encourage the recovery team to continue with the original plan, which was to make annual releases over three years.

With the generous support of the MPG and other community groups and individuals, NHT funding was obtained through a cross-regional project with SCRIPT and NACC, the two NRM regional groups that cover the dibbler's range. Just as important for the program was the regular involvement of MPG stalwart Geoff Burrow, who is a vital member of the monitoring team and has been at every monitoring session since early 2003.

By spring 2004, the population was booming and 52 individual dibblers were captured, most of which were young born in May that year. Things looked good. However disaster struck the next year when a huge downpour on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2004 rendered the reserve inaccessible without compromising *Phytophthora* hygiene rules. Continued wet soil conditions rendered fox baiting from vehicles impossible until October that year. One of the four annual aerial distributions of fox bait under *Western Shield* was carried out during that time, in June, but when trapping resumed in October, only 3 adult males were caught.

This was a setback for the program, but renewed baiting at a higher rate from October 2005 onwards saw the capture in September 2006 of 9 dibblers, including 3 adult males, 1 adult female and 5 juveniles (all females). Clearly, a few breeding animals had survived the reinvasion of foxes. The dibblers were back! And the dieback-free status of the reserve, necessary for the preservation of dibbler habitat, had been maintained.

Another six captive-bred dibblers were released in the reserve in October 2006, and the dibbler capture rate since then indicates a steady recovery. We are hoping for more good results in our spring 2007 monitoring session, when this year's young will be trappable.

Meanwhile, another mainland dibbler reintroduction has been carried out in the Stirling Range National Park, again using dibblers bred in captivity at Perth Zoo. Intensified fox baiting has also been necessary here to maintain the dibbler colony, and it is too early to conclude whether the establishment will be successful, but this should become clearer after spring this year.

631 words